

*Homeland Security, HUD Secretaries Will Tour Gulf Coast in Early March*  
February 20, 2009

WASHINGTON, D.C. - In response to a letter from U.S. Rep. Charlie Melancon (LA-03) and the entire Louisiana delegation, President Barack Obama announced today he had signed an executive order extending the Office of the Federal Coordinator for Gulf Coast Rebuilding. The President also announced he has asked Homeland Security Secretary Janet Napolitano and Housing and Urban Development Secretary Shaun Donovan to tour the Gulf Coast and New Orleans on March 5 and 6 to assess rebuilding efforts.

The executive order that established the office was set to expire on February 28. The executive order President Obama signed today (see attached) extended the office through the end of the fiscal year, September 30, 2009.

**"Our recovery from Hurricanes Katrina and Rita is still far from complete, as anyone who has recently visited St. Bernard Parish, New Orleans, Plaquemines Parish and other Gulf Coast communities has seen," said Rep. Melancon. "I am pleased that President Obama, in one of his first acts as President, is demonstrating his commitment to addressing our ongoing recovery needs.**

**Rep. Melancon continued, "By sending two high profile cabinet members to witness firsthand both our progress and remaining challenges, the President is showing that Louisiana's recovery will be a priority for this new Administration. I'm sure I speak for all Louisianians when I say we welcome these new partners in our rebuilding and look forward to working together in building a stronger south Louisiana."**

Earlier this month, Rep. Melancon and the Louisiana delegation sent President Obama a letter (see attachment) asking him to extend the tenure of the Office of Gulf Coast Rebuilding. In asking for the extension, the delegation wrote, "The rebuilding and re-emergence of the New Orleans area, southwest Louisiana, and the rest of the Gulf is critical to the well-being not only of those residents, but to the entire country."

In signing the executive order, President Obama said, "The residents of New Orleans and the Gulf Coast who are helping rebuild are heroes who believe in their communities and they are succeeding despite the fact that they have not always received the support they deserve from the Federal government. This executive order is a first step of a sustained commitment by my Administration to rebuild now, stronger than ever."

"In the coming weeks, I will dispatch Secretaries Napolitano and Donovan to see first-hand the progress made in New Orleans and the Gulf Coast and report back on the needs they see in the region. We must ensure that the failures of the past are never repeated. My Administration is committed to strengthening our preparedness, response, and recovery efforts," President Obama said.

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